

Santa Fe National Forest Fisheries Program Annual Report 2001



Since the program's inception in August 2000, the forest fish program has been working diligently towards the recovery of native fish, mainly Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Efforts toward fish recovery are not unfamiliar to me, so I know the slow methodical pace that needs to be done. With fish on the Santa Fe, it is no different. We have to move forward with gaining and deserving fellow agency and public trust and respect, especially in our local communities. With many of the communities centuries old and I just got here, I have some catching up to do and legacies to battle. The communities are a crucial part of the ecosystem and have to be considered mutually. Education is key to the success of a recovery program. We have moved strongly through the government sludge to develop an education program called Respect the Rio. This program will have a leader on board in 2002 acting as Forest Education Coordinator. In order to get recovery work done, you need passionate and energetic leadership. We are working together with great leaders in local, regional and national groups. Without these ideal partners, the fish would be dead in the water.

All that, and we haven't even talked about being in the water. Upon my arrival, it was clear that solid but sporadic efforts had been done in the past. Without new data for nearly a decade, I recruited a stellar team to begin building our field program. Katrina Lund and Mike Bassett arrived last spring. Little did they know what they were in for. With no equipment and no baseline data, they put in long days to gear us up and prepare for a monumental field season. In June, we moved our office to Jemez Springs to focus on a field program. In that same month, James Simino and Chris Gatton joined us along with our student recruits. They worked solidly as a team and went above and beyond my wishes.

It was a rewarding year for me, watching a program developed on paper become a reality. It was a thrill to swim in waters next to native fish and begin to develop a clear picture of how we will recover them. Our steps were small in the big picture but the largest ever seen on this forest. I am grateful for the tremendous effort and quality product my team put together this year. They built a strong foundation for our future work, which I am hopeful you will be part of. The excitement is here.

-Sean Ferrell
Forest Fish Biologist
3 December 2001

The Illustrious Staff

Sean Ferrell, Forest Fisheries Biologist

Program Leader; appointed as National Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Coordinator and Chair for National Aquatic Education Committee



James Simino, Fisheries Biologist

Habitat Team Leader and GPS/GIS Database Manager

Katrina Lund, Fisheries Biologist

Education Coordinator and Field Crew Team Leader



The Field Crew

Forest:

Damon Goodman
Megan Vogt
Renee West

Adrian Velasco
Jennifer Wenberg
Rachel Jankowitz
Kristine Deuvall
Bob Calamusso
Diana Kelleher

Pecos:

Anne Bolick
Dwayne Lefthand
Chris Luerkens
Cody Robertson

Hutton Students:

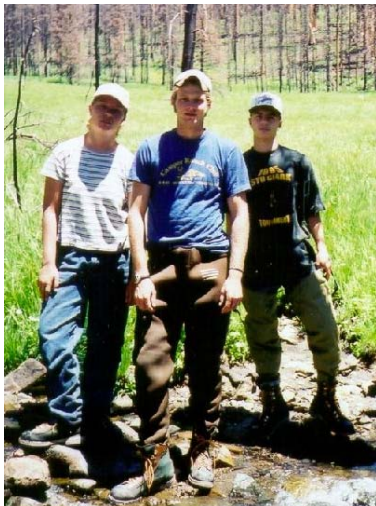
Amos Corrales
Jose Marfin
Veronica Trujillo
Peter Sena

Volunteers:

Kristen Behrens (SCA)
Ranee Onstott
Chuck Helma



San Pedro Parks Wilderness. (L to R) James, Renee, Kristen, Sean, Anne Karsian, Megan, Ranee, Katrina, Mike



Elk Creek. (L to R): Anne B, Cody, Peter



Chris L.

Partners and Contributors

Mary Orr
Bill Britton
Barry Imler
Alison Dean
Anna Jaramillo
Julie Larson
Danielle Diehl
Howard Cordova
Ernest Trujillo
Chris Chavez
Donald Serrano
Espanola/Coyote Recreation Staff
Forest Recreation Staff
Carson National Forest
Donna Storch
Juan Martinez
Rio Grande National Forest
Sue Swift-Miller
State of New Mexico Game & Fish
Peter Wilkinson
Yvette Paroz
RGCT Conservation Team
Bruce May
Amy Harig
Bill Schudlich
Jan Crawford
Bill Orr
New Mexico Trout

Trout Unlimited
High Desert Angler
Seasports, Inc.
New Mexico Environment Department
Jemez Fire Program
Jemez/Cuba Recreation Staff
Bob Calamusso
New Mexico State University
Western Washington University
Colorado State University
Nicole McRury
Amy Unthank
Don DeLorenzo
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Bureau of Land Management
Jemez Valley Public Schools
Valles Caldera National Preserve
American Fisheries Society
Pam Barber
Student Conservation Association
Mary Caldwell
Doc Minter
K-Mart
Wal-Mart
Best Buy
Ponderosa Ditch Association
Ted Heath



Kids' Fishing Day. Kristen

Stream Inventory

Santa Fe National Forest championed the development of a regional stream inventory for cold water streams. This protocol has also been adopted by Rio Grande National Forest in Region 2. The inventory gathers hard numbers on habitat components related to stream condition and is repeatable as a monitoring tool.



East Fork Jemez. Megan and James

Our Forest sponsored two training sessions that was attended by three national forests and a valuable partner, New Mexico Trout. In the course of a brisk and hard-working summer, the Santa Fe National Forest Fisheries Program with great assistance from the Pecos/Las Vegas Districts completed **105 miles** of stream inventory.

- Rio de las Vacas* (14 miles)
- Rio Cebolla (22 miles)
- East Fork Jemez River (22 miles)
- Rio Frijoles (6 miles)
- Rio Medio* (3 miles)
- Cow Creek (17 miles)
- Elk Creek (4 miles)
- Sheep Creek (2 miles)
- Gallinas River (10 miles)
- Bull Creek* (5 miles)

**- will be completed in 2002*

Fish Distribution

Santa Fe National Forest led the way in introducing a new snorkeling protocol to determine fish composition, distribution and population. The Carson National Forest has adapted this protocol. While at the stream inventory training, attendees had the pleasure of enjoying the last day in the water snorkeling. Individuals from the Rio Grande and Carson National Forests along with Trout Unlimited, New Mexico Trout and New Mexico State University were trained over the summer season. This upstream snorkeling methodology looks a little odd but paved the way for nearly **165 miles** of mapping streams for fish composition and distribution across the Forest.



Rio Medio. Sean

- Rio Medio
- Rio Frijoles
- San Antonio Creek
- Rio de las Vacas
- Rio Cebolla
- Peralta Canyon
- Rio Puerco de Chama
- Rito Resumidero
- Rito Anastacio
- Rito las Perchas
- Clear Creek
- Capulin Creek
- Rio Gallina
- Rio Puerco de Grande
- Cecilia Creek
- Gallinas River
- Elk Creek
- Cow Creek
- American Creek

Hutton Program

AFS sponsored a program funded by the Hutton Fund called the Junior Fisheries Program. This program offered 16 opportunities to high school students across the United States to be mentored by a Forest Service Fisheries Biologist. Four of these students were on the Santa Fe National Forest. This was in large part by the exemplary effort of Barry Imler on the Coyote Ranger District for hosting three students and coordinating their work across four ranger districts. As always, Barry will defer and give many deserved thanks to Alison Dean for supervising the students. A thanks goes out to Joseph Lujan as well on the Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger District for hosting one student. These students participated in watershed and range monitoring as well as stream inventory and fish population surveys. In addition, they assisted with implementing district projects. We hope to continue the tradition of offering these opportunities to local students.

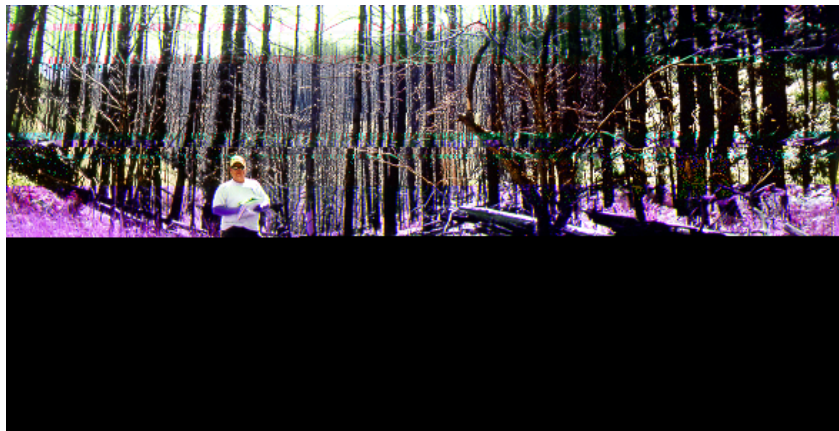
National Río Grande Cutthroat Trout Coordination

Region 3 is the national lead for Río Grande cutthroat trout recovery efforts and nominated Sean Ferrell as the national coordinator. This, in turn, has placed the Santa Fe National Forest in the spotlight of native trout recovery. With this role, the Santa Fe championed the development of a Río Grande Cutthroat Trout Conservation Team, which comprises of managers from two regional offices, Río Grande, Carson, Lincoln, Gila and Santa Fe National Forests along with Colorado Division of Fisheries, New Mexico Game and Fish and US Fish and Wildlife Service. This team commenced in an inaugural summit, developing agreements and strategies for recovery. As part of this role, the Santa Fe chartered the development of a Range-Wide Conservation Agreement and placed the final touches on the New Mexico State-Wide Conservation Agreement. These will likely be signed by February 2002. The coordinator role will become a more intense responsibility in the upcoming year as the US Fish and Wildlife Service conducts a candidate assessment for Río Grande cutthroat trout.



Post-Burn Watershed Recovery Monitoring

The great fires of 2000, Viveash and Cerro Grande, are being monitored for watershed recovery rates. In partnership with Colorado State University, aquatic macroinvertebrates are being looked at to determine aquatic biota recovery. This may be used as a flag to determine when native fish can be re-introduced. Over in the Viveash, the Pecos Fish Team, led by Chris Gatton, began monitoring the waters for re-introduction of Río Grande cutthroat trout in the Cow Creek Watershed. For a comparative study, the team looked at the unburned Gallinas Watershed just over the ridge. A plan will be developed in 2002 based on their findings on how and where to proceed. Then, it's a waiting game.



Cow Creek. Dwayne

Respect the Rio

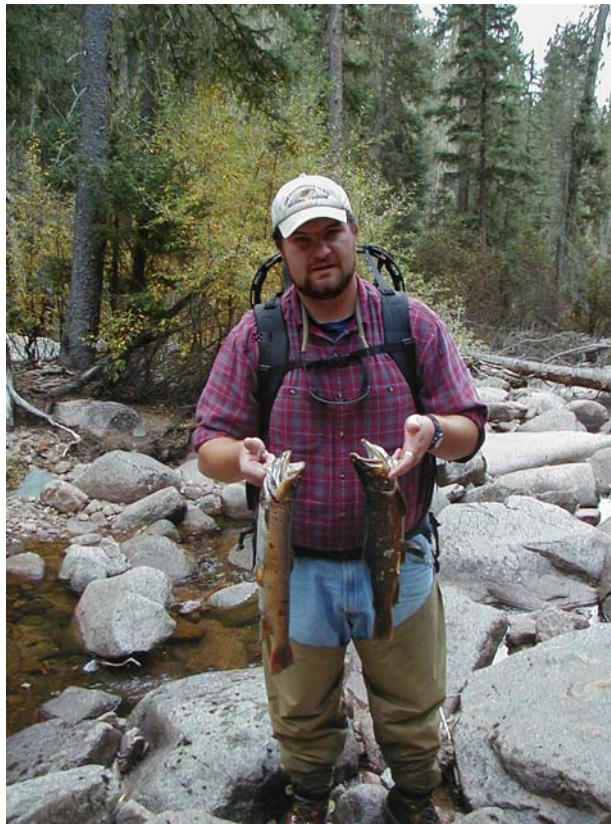


Respect the River first began in the Pacific Northwest in 1993 and has spread to six national forests across the United States. Adopted as Respect the Rio, it is an educational program that empowers local communities and forest users to participate in watershed restoration. These are the people who care the most; they just need a little guidance on how.

While the program is young on the Santa Fe, we have acquired grant funding through NMED/EPA as well as a conservation grant from the Washington Office. This will go towards programs in schools, public contact, campfire programs and developing products such as native fish aquaria in classrooms, museums, nature centers and visitor centers and native fish mascots (including a sucker).

Exotic Species Removal

After determining that a man-made barrier in Rio de las Vacas was no longer keeping back non-native brown trout from penetrating waters occupied by native Rio Grande cutthroat trout, fisheries troops with the assistance of Pecos/Las Vegas personnel, NMED and NMG&F moved in with electroshockers. Teams over a period of three months removed 180 brown trout from the native trout waters. Another team located non-native eastern brook trout within the Viveash Burn in the headwaters of Elk Creek. This came as a surprise since surrounding waters continue to be a dead zone due to post-fire effects. The brook trout were removed in a joint effort between Pecos/Las Vegas personnel and the Forest Fish Program.



Rio de las Vacas, James

Program Support

In its inaugural year, the Forest Fisheries Program continues to develop relationships with other programs and has provided input into on-going and upcoming projects. The projects are sponsored by recreation, engineering, forestry, watershed, and range, including:

- Las Conchas Fishing Area
- San Antonio Campground
- Highway 126 EIS
- Viveash Fire Salvage EIS
- Sierra Mosca EA/AMP
- Gallina EA/AMP
- French Mesa EA/AMP
- Peralta EA/AMP

San Pedro Parks Wilderness Monitoring

Our forest fish team worked jointly with Jemez/Cuba Watershed, Range and Recreation Staff as well as assistance from Watershed in Coyote. Two week-long intensive efforts covered most of the riparian area and streams within the 40,000-acre San Pedro Parks Wilderness. Crews looked at water quality, Arizona willow and Rio Grande cutthroat distribution. Several new populations of Arizona will and Rio Grande cutthroat trout were found. This effort will continue on an annual basis, assisting range and recreation with the implementation of their programs.



Rio Puerco de Grande

Kid's Fishing Day



Nearly 200 kids and over 100 adults turned out for the Forest's Annual Kid's Fishing Day at Ponderosa Pond. This event was jointly sponsored by New Mexico G&F and Jemez Ranger District and will likely return to Seven Springs Hatchery in future years.

This year's theme was "Celebrating Native Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout." Kids were given a passport and if they participated in

six educational booths they received a T-shirt commemorating the day. The T-shirt was illustrated by 2nd and 3rd grade students in Jemez Valley, based on their best rendition of the native trout.

Booths included:

- Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Life Cycle Game (USFS)
- Rolling River (NRCS)
- Whirling Disease (NMG&F)
- Project Wet (BLM)
- Leave No Trace (USFS)
- Native Fish Anatomy (NMG&F/USFS)
- Fishing Ethics (NMG&F)



For further information about the Santa Fe National Forest Fisheries Program, contact:

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